

RURAL HIGH-SPEED INTERNET ACCESS TASKFORCE MEETING

Public Hearing January 3, 2008 Missouri Southern State University Joplin, Missouri

ATTENDANCE LIST

Taskforce Members

Sen. John Griesheimer (via phone)
Rep. Joe Aull (via phone)
Rep. Mike Dethrow
Chuck Bryant
Estil Fretwell
Doug Galloway (via phone)
Dr. Craig Klimczak (via phone)
David Klindt (via phone)
Arthur Martinez
Bill Mitchell (via phone)
Bill Rohde (via phone)
Dan Ross
John Sondag (for Cindy Brinkley)
Michael Zarrilli (via phone)

Staff Members

Jerry Dowell
Bob Donnelly
Elizabeth Hobbs (via phone)

Witnesses

Brian Carpenter
Jeff Denefrio
Wade Dicks
Chip Hailey
W. Jay Mitchell
Mary Shinn
Anita Diane Scott
Bob Williams
Scott Zimmer

Guests

Charles Davis
Isaiah Davis
Edward Hattery
Todd Hodges
Bob Jackson
Cheri M. Johnson
Kevin L. Johnson
Ewell Lawson
Charlotte McClure
Ron Neidert
Dale Schnelle
David Simmet

1. Welcome and Introductory Remarks - Representative Mike Dethrow, District 153

In the absence of Lt. Governor Peter Kinder, Representative Mike Dethrow called the meeting to order at approximately 5:02 p.m.

2. Roll Call of Members

Rep. Dethrow asked the taskforce members present either in person in Joplin or via the conference call to state their names for the record.

3. Approval of Minutes from the December 13, 2007 Meeting – Sikeston, MO

Rep. Dethrow asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 13th meeting in Sikeston, MO. A motion was made and seconded and the Task Forces members voted to approve the meeting minutes.

4. Approval of Minutes from the December 14, 2007 Meeting - St. Louis, MO

Rep. Dethrow asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 14th meeting in St. Louis, MO. A motion was made by John Sondag and seconded by Arthur Martinez. The Task Forces members then voted to approve the meeting minutes.

5. Update from Jerry Dowell on RFI (Request for Information)

Rep. Dethrow asked Jerry Dowell for an update on the Broadband Internet RFI (Request for Information). Jerry Dowell reported that an initial RFI was approved at the last meeting in St. Louis and is available for viewing on the Lt. Governor's website. He stated that the RFI was sent out on December 17, 2007 to roughly 80 to 100 Information Technology industry groups. Jerry said due date for submissions is January 7, 2008.

6. Public Testimony

Rep. Dethrow reported that several people had indicated they wished to testify. The following people were asked to come forward and testify:

➤ 1st Witness: Mr. Chip Hailey

Mr. Hailey, who works at the Independent Living Center in Joplin, testified on behalf of the Blind and Disabled Community at large and the Missouri Council of the Blind regarding the impact that the lack of choices in rural communities for high-quality, high-speed internet access and high prices have on all people but especially those with disabilities and limited incomes. Chip Hailey stated that the only DSL internet service available to him at his home would cost three times as much as his current dial-up internet service, making it unaffordable for him. He talked about how the internet, with Screen Reader software, can allow people with disabilities, like himself, to experience greater ease to communicate via email with others, to shop and to research news and information. In conclusion, Mr. Hailey encouraged the Task Force to really push to find ways to make reasonably priced, high-speed internet access readily available to all Missourians, especially those with disabilities.

➤ 2nd Witness: Bob Williams – General Manager, Carthage Water and Electric Plant

Mr. Williams said he wished to address legislative efforts that have taken place in the present state of legislation and the feelings of the Missouri Association of Municipal Utilities and the American Public Power Association on telecommunication legislation. He talked about the history of the fiber-optic network that the Carthage Water and Electric built and how it has been expanded to provide high-speed internet service to many entities, such as city and county governments, the local hospital and people in their community. Bob Williams stated that the Carthage Water and Electric Plant and the American Public Power Association will continue to comply with current Federal and State telecommunication legislation. He also stated that the American Public Power Association will work to eliminate barriers to municipalities ability to engage in telecommunication services and will not be supportive of any legislation which will try to bar any of the telecommunication activities which are currently allowed.

- 3rd Witness: Anita Diane Scott
Ms. Scott testified about the problems her daughter has encountered while trying to use dial-up internet service for school related research. She stated that since there were no options to obtain DSL service at her home, she had investigated the cost of satellite internet services and had found it would be too high for her to afford as it would run \$70.00 per month. She encouraged the Task Force to find solutions for such problems.
- 4th Witness: Jeff Denefrio – Internet Business Manager, Cable One
Mr. Denefrio talked about the history of Cable One in Joplin, MO. He testified that the major barrier they have encountered to expanding their service area and the services they provide is the cost factor. Mr. Denefrio stated that it costs around \$20,000.00 to build a mile of cable. He suggested that tax credits and subsidies could help encourage companies to invest capital to ‘build out’ and service rural areas.
- 5th Witness: Brian Carpenter – President & CEO, I3 Technologies Group
Mr. Carpenter gave a brief history of his company and then spoke about Synchronized Mesh technology, which he feels could be a solution for bringing high-speed internet services to rural communities.
- 6th Witness: Jay Mitchell – President, Seneca Telephone Company, Seneca, MO
Mr. Mitchell testified that his company had been able to expand and offer a large service area with several high-speed internet options. He stated that his company had invested over two million dollars on infrastructure upgrades. Mr. Mitchell said he wanted the Task Force to know that there are family-owned companies and co-ops that are able to provide high-speed internet services to the rural communities of Missouri.
- 7th Witness: Scott Zimmer – Air Advantage Franchising Group
Mr. Zimmer testified that he is the owner of an internet provider company in rural Michigan which concentrates on reaching customers who have no opportunity to have high-speed internet access. He stated that they had participated in United States Department of Agriculture Rural Utility Service which has a program that helps companies bring broadband service to rural America by providing low interest funding to grow their networks. He encouraged the Task Force to take a hard look at ways it might provide funding to companies that want to bring broadband internet services into rural America. Mr. Zimmer also identified access to vertical assets as another barrier to providing internet services to rural areas.
- 8th Witness: Wade Dicks – Original Founder, Fast Freedom(?) Internet Services, Joplin, MO
Mr. Dix testified he felt there should be some programs which would make it worthwhile to rural towns and publicly owned water companies to allow internet providers access to their water towers and to provide funding for equipment and other costs.
- 9th Witness: Mary Shinn
Ms. Schinn wished to ask the Task Force to investigate why she is able to have cell phone service, but not wireless internet service.

Public testimony ended at approximately 6:42 p.m.

7. Adjournment

Rep. Dethrow asked if there was any further business. Jerry Dowell announced the upcoming meeting dates and locations. He also mentioned that the Task Force website allowed people to view all the information collected by the Task Force and that there is a link on the Lt. Governor's website (www.ltgov.mo.gov).

The meeting ended at approximately 6:44 p.m.